

The UAF Faculty Senate passed the following at Meeting #183, May 7, 2012:

MOTION:

The UAF Faculty Senate moves to approve a Minor in Paleontology.

EFFECTIVE: Fall 2012
 Upon Chancellor’s approval.

RATIONALE: See the program proposal #10-UNP on file in the Governance
 Office, 312B Signers' Hall.

Overview:

Paleontology is an interdisciplinary field; graduate paleontology programs may be housed within geology or biology departments. We regularly receive inquiries from students of biology and anthropology who are interested in taking paleontology courses, and the recent addition of a vertebrate paleontologist to our faculty has added new breadth and expertise to our paleontology curriculum. The current Geology minor provides a flexible option for students, but does not provide a clear path for students interested in fossil organisms. The proposed Paleontology minor is designed to provide a customized emphasis for interested BA students, Anthropology majors, or Biological Sciences majors who wish to add breadth to focus on a topic of lifelong interest, add breadth to their degree program, or pursue graduate studies in paleontology, respectively. The foundation courses will provide students with a solid grounding in geological concepts and practices. The electives allow students to strengthen their understanding of sedimentary environments and biostratigraphy (GEOS 322), investigate the morphology and evolution of a particular group (invertebrates GEOS 315W; vertebrates GEOS 486, or plants GEOS 453), master fossil preparation and curation skills (GEOS 3170) or explore the classic and current paleontological literature (GEOS 485).

Proposed Minor Requirements:

Paleontology

College of Natural Science & Mathematics

1. Complete the following foundation courses:

- GEOS F10IX--The Dynamic Earth..... 4 credits
- GEOS F112X--The History of Earth and Life 4 credits

2. Complete three of the following Paleontology electives:

- GEOS F315W--Paleobiology and Paleontology 4 credits
- GEOS F322--Stratigraphy and Sedimentation 4 credits

GEOS F3170--Paleontological Research and Laboratory Methods..... 2 credits
 GEOS 453--Palynology and Paleopalynology 4 credits
 GEOS F486--Vertebrate Paleontology 3 credits
 GEOS F485-Mass Extinctions, Neocatastrophism and the History of Life 3 credits

3. Minimum credits required 16-20 credits

Relationship to the “Purposes of the University”:

Paleontology is an exciting area of current research in Alaska and an area of growing expertise in the Dept. of Geology and Geophysics. UAF paleontologists Druckenmiller and Fowell receive regular inquiries from students who would like to study paleontology, conduct undergraduate research or volunteer at the VA Museum. Because of the interdisciplinary nature of the field, students often have difficulty figuring out which department offers paleontology courses. Many students search for a "paleontology department" and are confused not to find one. The proposed paleontology minor will help students to locate paleontology courses, expose students to results from ongoing research projects, connect faculty with interested undergraduate researchers and volunteers, and provide a conduit for disseminating new discoveries in Alaskan paleontology.

The proposed minor highlights the diversity of topics housed beneath the Geoscience umbrella and provides students with a clear path to a concentration in paleontology. Because the minor consists of courses required for all Geoscience students (GEOS 101 and GEOS 112) and elective courses that are central to the Geology (GEOS 322) and Paleontology Options (all other courses), the minor places no additional demands on faculty workloads. Unless the Paleontology minor attracts upwards of 5 students per year, we do not foresee a need for additional space. Therefore, while we expect a small increase in enrollments within the Geoscience degree program, the minor provides a service to students at little cost to the department or college.

In short, the proposed Paleontology minor will Educate, exposing students to current and classical research in the field of paleontology; Prepare students for graduate studies, biostratigraphy positions in the petroleum industry or jobs as museum technicians; Connect active researchers with an interested undergraduate population; Engage students from other BS and BA programs through active learning and student-driven projects; and Discover, offering research and field opportunities to talented undergraduates.

Catherin J. Cahill 5/7/12
 President, UAF Faculty Senate Date

APPROVAL: 
 Chancellor's Office

DATE: 5/8/12

DISAPPROVED: _____
 Chancellor's Office

DATE: _____